

Why does Fort Carson need to expand PCMS?

On Feb 14, the U.S. Army announced that a waiver was granted to the moratorium on major land acquisition by the Under Secretary of Defense. This announcement allows Fort Carson to evaluate the potential acquisition of up to an additional 418,577 acres to its current 235,368 acre Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site. Up until now, much of the dialogue has been strictly notional because it hinged on whether the moratorium would be lifted.

So, why does Fort Carson need to expand PCMS?

The answer. We (Fort Carson) need to expand PCMS in order to ensure that our soldiers are prepared to fight and win on today and tomorrow's battlefield.

During the Cold War, our Army was characterized by large formations called divisions (approximately 20,000 Soldiers). These divisions trained to fight in relatively small areas of Europe; consequently training could be conducted in an area of approximately 5 by 7 miles. Today, brigade-size formations or Brigade Combat Teams, comprised of approximately 3,500 Soldiers, form the core of our force and make our Army more deployable, flexible, lethal, and adaptive. While Army units have gotten smaller, the battlefield has gotten much larger and BCTs now have the responsibility to operate in areas of approximately 31 by 31 miles or an area of more than 615,000 acres. Fort Carson's 3rd BCT, 4th Infantry Division that just returned from Iraq in the fall and the 2nd BCT, 2nd Infantry Division, currently in Iraq, are great examples of BCTs responsible for areas that would have previously been controlled by a much larger size force.

This change in operations and unit size has resulted in major changes to Army training requirements. The ever evolving sophistication of military equipment and advances in technology requires an expanded training environment that better simulates the tempo, distance, intensity, and complexity our BCTs will face on current and future battlefields. Further, as a responsible steward of the environment, we must have the ability to "rest and rotate" the land after a training event in order to allow it to both naturally recover and to enhance

overall training realism. This can only be accomplished if we have the training land available.

Fort Carson is committed to ensuring U.S. success in the Global War on Terrorism. The strategic reality that lies before us is that this war in which we are fighting will be a long one. Fort Carson has and will continue to play a vital role in the defense of our nation. Our core competency must always be — to train and equip Soldiers, grow leaders and to provide relevant and ready land power to combatant commanders and the joint team.

In order to meet this obligation, we must be able to provide the right equipment, the right training, and a realistic training environment that challenges our Soldiers and leaders. We must train the way we fight. And this is why we must have a PCMS that replicates, as close as possible, the real-world circumstances and complexities our Soldiers will face on the battlefield of today and tomorrow.

In the near future, we hope to have our first of many public meetings on the potential expansion of PCMS. This is the first step in a long process, to actively seek public and agency comments and participation to ensure all interests are heard before any decision is made. After initial Army alternatives are developed, the next step will be the publication of a “Notice of Intent” to prepare the Environmental Impact Statement. The EIS will further foster dialogue as well as potential alternatives, measures, economic and environmental impacts of the proposed acquisition.

It is our goal that these meetings be well attended and ideas, options and alternatives are not only shared, but heard by all.

Lt. Col. David G. Johnson
Fort Carson Public Affairs